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ABSTRACT

This resource guide describes strategies teachers can use for specific instructional problems in the basic skill areas. The problem addressed in this booklet is the remediation of elementary students who performed poorly on the Florida Assessment Test. Questions that teachers should consider in trying to solve this problem are identified, and alternative research-based instructional strategies are discussed. Three model programs are described--a "pull-out" program, tutoring programs, and a program involving direct instruction by the teacher. Information is given on obtaining further information on this topic. (JD)

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STRATEGIES TO REMEDIATE STUDENTS WHO PERFORMED POORLY ON THE FLORIDA ASSESSMENT TEST GRADES 3-5

An Educational Problem/Strategy Booklet

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Office of Educational Dissemination/Diffusion
Florida Department of Education

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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PROBLEM:

A number of our school's third and fifth grade students performed poorly on the statewide assessment test. Our school wants to provide remediation for these students.

QUESTIONS:

1. What instructional model can our school use to provide remediation for students so that scores on the statewide assessment test are increased?

2. Are there some specific programs or materials that our school could implement that would result in increased scores on the statewide assessment test?

THE NATURE OF THE STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT TEST:

Before we jump directly to exploring models or materials, we need to consider the nature of the Florida Statewide Assessment Test, Grade 3 and 5. The testmakers have designed the test by taking educational goals in basic skills and translating them into specific objectives. The test items are constructed to assess whether or not students have mastered the stated objective.

An objective, by definition, is learnable; that is, it is a behavior that students can acquire through instruction. It is a behavior that students can master through practice. Therefore, student performance on the test can be increased by the school's attention to its instructional program. The profile of student performance on the statewide assessment test does provide the school with an indication of where student deficiencies lie. The information from the test can be used to plan instruction. These qualities make the statewide assessment test quite different from a norm-referenced achievement test or an intelligence test.

A second strength of the statewide assessment test is the fact that in selecting the educational goals and making the translation into objectives, the testmakers arrived at a very general and basic set of skills. The state's minimum standards are not essentially different from many a typical reading or math program already in operation. Since the skills being presently taught in the school are similar to the state's minimum standards, drastic changes in curriculum are not required. The school can concentrate on improving its instructional program to ensure that all of its students master the minimum set of basic skills.

WHAT RESEARCH SAYS ARE SOME CRITICAL FACTORS IN BASIC SKILLS ACHIEVEMENT:

A number of studies have consistently pointed to time spent on task as the most critical factor in basic skills achievement (Berliner and Rosenshine, 1977; Gow, 1977; Felsenthal, 1978). When observers visited ordinary classrooms and watched basic skill instruction and student behavior, they found that the score on the basic skills test was directly related to the amount of time students spent attending to and doing the instructional tasks. Observers discovered that it was not uncommon for many students to spend as little as 3 to 5 minutes a day on reading. (The time measured was student time on task, and not the time scheduled for reading.)

A second contributing factor that was noted was direct instruction. (Berliner and Rosenshine, 1977; Becker, 1977.) Direct instruction occurs when the teacher informs the students of the goal of the instruction and then has the students engage in practice that leads directly to the achievement of the goal. For a clearer picture of direct instruction, let us compare it with incidental learning. Suppose that two teachers both have as an objective that their students learn to spell the 100 most-frequently used words. Teacher A plans incidental instruction. She assigns students the task of writing a story. She makes sure to point out incorrect spelling and have students rewrite papers until all of the spelling in the story is correct. At the end of six weeks she gives a spelling test of 100 words.

Teacher B plans direct instruction. She tells her students that she wants everyone of them to learn to spell the 100 words on the list. She has subdivided the list into manageable units, selecting words with similar features, etc. Twice a week the students take a pretest on a unit of words, practice spelling the words inaccurately spelled, and take a post-test on the words. The teacher also provides some crossword puzzles and spelling word scrambles using the list. These activities make students attend to the letter order of the words. At the end of six weeks, Teacher B also gives a test of the 100 words. Achievement, that is, scores on the spelling test, is higher following direct instruction rather than incidental instructional methods.

Of course, well-organized materials and educational products can contribute to learning efficiency. Skills instruction is enhanced by a product that spells out objectives, provides adequate learning activities so that students learn to achieve the objective step-by-step. But a school should not expect materials to perform miracles.

HOW CAN A SCHOOL REMEDIATE ITS DEFICIENT STUDENTS?

Deficient students are behind; they require more time to learn the basic skills. When a school plans to provide deficient students with time to learn, it must answer the following questions:

1. Who will guide the students during the time it takes to learn the skills? Classroom teachers? Special teachers? Tutors? Aides?

2. Where will the deficient students be placed during the time required to learn the skills? Left in the regular classroom? In a special room or lab? In the hall? In the library?

3. When will the students receive the special instruction? Will they miss out on regular class activities? Will teachers be able to say when students should leave the classroom?

4. What materials, strategies, testing, record-keeping are needed for instruction? How will they be chosen? Who will provide the funding? Where will the materials be kept?

Since the problem of deficient students instruction is a common one, a number of educational models which answer the questions have been developed. Each model has been field-tested and proven successful. A school planning to remediate its deficient students must first decide which model best fits its local situation. Then, after deciding on the appropriate model, a search for a more specific educational program or product can be made.

When your school determines which model is most appropriate, it can contact FREE for information on products designed using the model. Three successful models for remediating students are discussed below:

MODEL I: "Pull-Out" Model

The school decides that its deficient students need specialized instruction that can be provided by a professional teacher. The school finds a classroom and equips it with specific skills learning materials. The teacher is assigned from the existing ranks or is added to the ranks. Students with specific deficiencies leave the regular classroom and attend the special class for 30 to 60 minutes per day.

Some "pull-out" programs operate very flexibly. Anytime a student tests "deficient" in any skill, the student may attend the "lab" or "pull-out" space for practice until mastery of the skill is attained. In other "pull-out" programs, students are assigned for half a year or an entire school year.

"Pull-out" programs are designed to add learning and practice. Teachers must take care to maintain the classroom skills program, and must not fall into the trap of assuming that the "pull-out" time is sufficient for the deficient student.

"Pull-out" programs typically require district, state, or federal resources to aid the school in establishing the space, the material and the personnel to provide instruction for deficient students.

MODEL II: Tutoring Programs

Tutoring is an effective way of providing deficient students with extra practice time. An effective tutoring program requires a coordinator. The coordinator is responsible for monitoring tutors, scheduling (in cooperation with teachers), monitoring student progress, and maintaining communication with teachers. Effective tutors come in surprising packages: peers, cross-age students, adult volunteers or aides can be used with success.

There are many inexpensive, well-constructed, and field-tested materials that may be used with a tutoring program. Of course, some materials already owned by the school can be adapted to meet the tutor's needs.

The tutor-tutee pair need some place to interact. Tutoring can be successfully carried out in the back of the classroom, in a niche in the hall, or in a special room. The best tutoring requires the student to say responses, so the space should be arranged so that neither tutoring pair nor regular students are interrupted.

MODEL III: The Classroom Teacher

In the classroom teacher model, the student stays in the regular classroom, and the teacher is assigned the task of providing the deficient student with extra instruction.

In most cases of unsuccessful remediation, the classroom teacher is assigned the task, but is given no special support to accomplish the task. If the classroom teacher model is selected, the school must plan to support the teachers with

training, time for planning, and with specific materials, if needed. Training and materials which follow the "direct-teaching" technique are suggested. Direct teaching techniques typically include methods of keeping students on task, as well as providing methods for translating objectives into student activities for direct learning.

Many direct-teaching programs include training about how to organize the classroom so that student learning time is used efficiently. For example, groups of students interact with the teacher during a skills learning session, and then follow-up the direct-teaching session with seatwork or learning center activities which reinforce the learning gained in the direct-teaching session.

After your school decides which model of instruction best fits the local situation, please send the last page of this packet to FREE to receive information on field-tested programs which are designed to correspond to the model selected: "pull-out" programs, reading or math skills programs that use tutors, or programs which feature direct-teaching.

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STRATEGIES TO REMEDIATE STUDENTS WHO PERFORMED POORLY ON THE FLORIDA ASSESSMENT TEST, GRADES 305

To receive more information, check the name of the selected EDUCATIONAL PROBLEM/STRATEGY BOOKLET on this sheet, detach, fold so that address shows, and mail.

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_____READING SKILLS PROGRAMS USING TUTORS

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